

Learning to Think Strategically: A Book Review

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Abstract

In *Learning to Think Strategically*, Julia Sloan examines the relationship between strategic thinking and the continuous learning. The book is a primer on how to think strategically. It traces the history of strategy, differentiates strategic thinking from planning, describes the influence of culture, streamlines the roles of rationality and intuition and identifies the key ways of learning to think strategically. Julia Sloan asserts - based on her continuous-learning, teaching, research and consultancy experience - that learning can transform thinking strategically into sustainable competitive advantage. The book links strategic thinking with continuous communication, knowledge management and engagement. Through its examination of personality development and strategic decision-making it promotes self-analysis and understanding. It is written clearly and organized systematically, with good indexing, a full bibliography and thorough notes to help the reader to a full understanding of the topic. The book is a complete solution to learning how to think strategically, both for individuals and organizations. It will be particularly valuable to chief learning officers, human-resource and organizational-development specialists, senior line managers and students of HR.

Keywords: Learning; Thinking; Strategy; Strategic thinking; Communication

Introduction

About the book author

Julia Sloan is the Principal of Sloan International Inc., a New York-based firm specializing in strategic thinking for leaders of businesses, government and international agencies operating in markets of Asia, Europe, the Middle East Africa and North America. She received her doctorate in organizational leadership from Columbia University where she teaches strategic thinking. Julia Sloan is a global executive development consultant working with leading international corporations operating in both emerging and developed markets. With more than a decade of expatriate corporate experience, Julia has lived and continues to work extensively in Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the United States. Her research interests include strategic thinking in relation to learning theory and social-cultural theory. She has lectured at Columbia University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and also Tokyo University, Nanjing University, and India Institute of Management. In addition to working in the corporate sector, Julia has also consulted for the United Nations, The World Bank, and UN Peacekeeping Operations. Julia regularly presents at international business conferences and has addressed organizations including MITI (Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry), ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), JETRO (Japan Export and Trade Organization), and the Ministry of Commerce in Thailand, India, and China. She has also testified before an array of international trade commissions. Currently residing in New York, Julia holds a doctorate from Columbia University in organizational leadership development.

In *Learning to Think Strategically*, author Julia Sloan presents a previously unexamined account of the relationship between strategic thinking and the continuous learning process involved- taking learning from the academic to the common man life including organizational success. This book is an original primer on how successful philosopher learns to think strategically. This authoritative book traces the history of strategy, differentiates strategic thinking from planning, describes the influence of culture, streamlines the roles of rationality and intuition, and identifies five key attributes for learning to think strategically. *Learning to Think Strategically* asserts that learning is the critical link to strategic thinking. Learning is a "conversion tool" that can transform thinking strategically into a sustainable competitive advantage.

The book is organized in very scientific and systematic manner with an understandable language which shows author's rich experience and knowledge in the field. Sequential presentation of contents, proper indexing, full bibliography and complete notes helps to reader for better understanding and future reading. It links the strategic thinking with continuous communication, knowledge management and engagement art. It emphasis on change management, efficient and effective decision making along with the cultural diversity to support successful strategic thinking by learning and doing in everyday living. It promote self-analysis and self-understanding too. It is a guide book to deal with intuition and smooth thought process for powerful lateral thinking. Attributes identification and analysis helps in personality development and strategic decision making as it deals with personality traits too. A comprehensive list of suggestions based on learning may help to all stakeholders in efficient and effective strategic thinking.

This book is a complete solution to learn strategic thinking, it helps to learn with the help of experience and reasoning.it promotes critical analysis approach.it present chorological analysis and development of strategy. This book helps in self-actualization as it promotes learning and brain storming for strategic thinking. It has tips for individuals and organizations both.it is a comprehensive book to formulate implement and evaluate the strategy from the learning point of view. It gives opportunity to learn from various opportunities.it promote overall development of the system rather than development of a single unit.it helps in integration of the system and smooth coordination and cooperation of the limited resources. It promotes informal learning process requires for strategic thinking process.

This book present a good example of learning application.it shows fundamental elements of learning for strategic thinking. It gives more important to critical dialogue and inquiry. It also gives important to socialization for better learning and better strategic thinking. It promote flexible strategic thinking along with the formal work environment based on the formal learning process.

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It is a thought provoking book fascinating cognitive learning supporting organizational learning along with learning organization. it drives strategic thinking process. It is very original book. Writing is candid. Thinking is comprehensive. In-depth analysis of leadership and learning along with innovativeness and sustainable growth and development strategy it is brilliant reading it is a roadmap from beginning to end for learning and thinking point of view. Real and just in time book. Meet the demand of global business environment.it provide the base to develop the skill in today's complex world market demand. Intelligent use of classical adult learning theory was used in this book and active engagement style was also used by author. This book is valuable collection to library. Highly recommended book for reading .critical dialogue with critical attributes needed to learning process was possible due to author vast experience at global level at academic as well as industry level.

This book is author journey on the road to understanding how the successful strategists learned to think strategically. In this book, she offers a synthesis of findings from several years of qualitative research in pursuit of a single question: How do successful executives *learn* to think strategically? As part of an interpretive case study, she conducted in-depth interviews with nine successful executives in Japan, Poland, China, Germany, the United States, and Hong Kong to pursue this inquiry. She visited the executives in their work environments to see what their worlds were like, to ask questions, to listen, and to observe.

Key learning from the book

- Action Learning Solving Problems
- Action Learning.
- Barriers to Reflection on Experience
- Building Leaders in Real Time
- content reflection
- Culture's Consequences.
- Cultures of Capitalism
- Darwinian adaptation
- Develop Strategy in a Global Context
- Dimensions of Adult Learning
- emotional readiness
- Empowerment, and Organizational Effectiveness
- Enabling Knowledge Creation
- Experience and Education
- Experience Curves as a Planning Tool
- Experiential Learning
- Human Capital Utilization
- Human Resource Development
- Images of Strategy
- Informal and Incidental Learning in the Workplace
- knowledge tracker
- Lateral Thinking,

- Leadership in Administration
- Learn from Experience.
- Learn Informally
- Learning as Transformation.
- learning curve and double loop learning
- Learning in the Social Context
- Managing the Unexpected
- Mind over Machine
- Operation Excellence.
- Organizational Learning
- Reflecting on the Strategy Process,
- Reflective Practitioner
- Reframing Organizations
- Reinventing Strategy
- strategic conversations
- Strategic Learning in a Knowledge Economy
- Strategy Safari
- The Concept of Corporate Strategy
- The Core Competence of the Corporation
- The Knowledge-Creating Company
- The Lessons of Experience
- The Logic of Business Strategy
- The Power of Intuition,
- The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning
- Theories of Learning.
- trans-situation learning and transformational learning
- Understanding Learning at Work
- Using the Strategic Planning Framework
- Working Globe Smart etc.

Each executive in the study had a story to tell. Collectively, their stories reveal certain common themes. Their stories emphasize the critical role of informal learning and the identification of five essential attributes required for learning to think strategically: imagination, broad perspective, “juggle,” no control over, and desire to win. It is striking that their learning was so similar in nature, given the diversity of backgrounds, industries, and histories.

Strong findings emerged that have influenced author's professional practice of consulting, teaching, training, and coaching, and she hope it will do the same for readers. Do these findings generalize? This is just a single interpretive qualitative research study on a handful of successful global executives. Her visits and work with other companies and organizations around the world have convinced her that the findings in this book apply broadly. But this is up to the readers to decide. Is it their story as well?

Learning to Think Strategically is structured around three key questions: (1) How do successful executives learn to think strategically? (Is it something they are taught? Where? By whom? How?) (2) What learning approaches are used by successful executive strategists? (3) What is most essential to their learning to think strategically?

Structure of the book

Part I: How did we get here?

1. Chronology of Strategy
2. Contemporary Competing Views of Strategy
3. Implications of Strategic History on Strategic Learning

Part II: How do we learn to Think Strategically?

4. Definition of Strategic Thinking
5. Informal and Formal Learning Defined
6. Formal Learning Refuted
7. Context and Learning: Transfer as Factors in the Strategic Thinking Process

Part III: What does Learning to Think Strategically Look Like?

8. Preparation Stage
9. Experience Stage
10. Re-Evaluation Stage

Part IV: How can we Get Started?

11. Overview of Learning Domains used for Strategic Thinking
12. The Surf and Dive Learning Domains

Part V: How can we Talk about all This?

13. The Role of Dialogue in the Strategic Thinking Process
14. What is the Role of Inquiry in Critical Dialogue?

Part VI: Why does some of this feel so familiar?

15. Intuition as a Must-Have for Learning to Think Strategically
16. Framing and the Intuition Factor
17. Shattering Frames
18. Reframing

Part VII: ...But what about the Numbers?

19. The Roles of Analysis and Intuition in Strategic Decision Making
20. Decision-Making Approaches to Strategic Thinking
21. Coordinating Intuition and Analysis to Facilitate Strategic Thinking

Part VIII: What Role does Culture Play?

22. The Role of Culture in Strategic Thinking
23. The Challenge of Introducing Strategic Thinking across Cultures

Part IX: Is Anybody Born with this Know-How?

24. The Five Critical Attributes
25. Interplay of the Five Attributes

26. Adaptation as a Strategic Expectation

Part X: How can we become Better Strategic Thinkers?

27. Developing the Five Essential Attributes
28. Developing Critical Reflective Processes
29. Where we've come from and where we can go: Some Suggestions

This book may give following benefits to readers

- Value Addition
- Retune on time
- Reading satisfaction
- Food for thought
- Self-Actualization
- Strategic thinking
- Continuous learning
- Intellectual joy
- Quality decision making
- Return on investment

Conclusion

Although this book focuses on the learning aspect of thinking strategically, this preliminary overview of strategy is provided in order to familiarize readers with an historical backdrop against which Western strategy evolved. The learning dimension of strategic thinking is vital to address because learning is generative in nature and it enables us to be adaptive and innovative. In turn, this leads to organizational sustainability and, ultimately, has the potential of creating winning strategies. This book is based on the author's continuous learning, teaching, and research and consultancy experience. This is book about strategy, learning, thinking, self-analysis and overall success which can be useful for following category of reader

- Chief learning Officers
- Entrepreneurs
- Executives
- Government Leaders
- Graduate Students
- HRD and OD leaders
- Internal and external consultants
- Policy makers
- Professors
- Research Scholar
- Senior Line Manager

The learning theorists and the complexity theorists agree that our current competitive, unpredictable, and inconsistent business environment places unprecedented demands on our capacity to recreate clever and resilient strategy. Drawing on Darwinism, we know that it is not the largest, the strongest, or even the most intelligent of species that survive- but the most adaptable to change.